

Diapering 101: Go Cloth

BY JENNIFER MOORE TEMPLE

In 2005, Jennifer Moore Temple and her husband Broo Temple began Buzzie Bee Diapers, a cloth diaper service and supply company in Rockland. Buzzie Bee Diapers is the midcoast's only diaper service, serving Belfast to Freeport, Washington to Vinalhaven. Passionate about cloth diapering, the environment and parenting with intention, Jennifer can be reached 542-0505 or via the company website www.BuzzieBee.com.

The days of origami folds, accidentally sticking your child with pins, and sloshing diapers in the toilet to rinse them are gone. Those were the diapering days of our mother — and their experiences have led to improvements in form and function — resulting in a new generation of cloth diapers. Today cloth diapering is easy and rewarding—both financially and environmentally. It is worth every moment of your time and dollar investment.

How much money do you really save?

You can make cloth diapering as inexpensive or as costly as you want. The cost depends on the diapers you use.

For disposable diapers, the average cost per diaper nationwide is \$0.31. If your child is potty-trained at 3 1/2 and you change your child every two hours, for fifteen hours (not changing during the time they are sleeping), you will average eight diapers per day. Eight diapers per day would not be accurate when they are a newborn, but this is probably the average amount of diapers you would use on any given day. The total cost for this figure (3 1/2 years times 8 diaper changes per day) is \$3,168 per child. This does not include additional costs of disposables such as dump fees, disposable wipes, gas, and the price of whatever impulse buys you might make when running to the store 'just' to pick up diapers.

The cost of cloth diapering, which includes the cost of cloth wipes, detergent and home laundering, ranges between \$400 and \$1300. This figure ultimately depends on whether or not you choose the Cadillac diapers or the Pintos. The cost of cloth diapering can be cut in half by using the diapers on a second child. Regardless of the style that you chose, you still come out financially ahead by using the cloth versus the disposable.

If using a diaper service, with an average weekly price of \$20, and an estimated 2 1/2 years with the service, families would spend \$2600. This compares to an estimated \$2263 for disposable diapers for the same amount of time. Using a diaper service takes almost all the work out of diapering. You'll still be responsible for changing your baby, but that's about it. A child in disposable diapers is likely to remain in them 6 to 12 months longer than a child in cloth. So, depending on when the child potty trains, the savings may be \$450-\$900 per child.

What are the different types of diapers out there?

Cloth diapers fall into two categories — those that require a diaper cover and those that do not. The diaper itself is the cloth part, most commonly made of cotton, hemp or bamboo. The diaper absorbs. The cover contains.

Most covers are gathered at the legs and secure around the waist with velcro or snaps.

Three types of diapers require a cover—flat, prefold and fitted diapers. Flat: a single layer diaper that is folded many times so that it fits every baby and dries quickly. Prefold: layers of cloth sewn together so that you don't have to fold multiple times. Fitted: gathered at the leg openings and secure around the waist with velcro or snaps. Two types of diapers do not require a separate diaper covers — all-in-ones and pocket diapers. All-in-ones are fitted diapers with the diaper cover built in, making the diaper waterproof. A pocket diaper is a fitted water-resistant outer shell with an opening in the back to insert absorbent material such as a prefold.

To determine which will work for your family, identify your motivation and budget for diapering. It's also perfectly fine to diversify your diapering portfolio, such as pockets or all-in-ones for travel, daycare, or babysitters and prefolds for home use.

How do I launder and care for the diapers?

Disposable and cloth diapers are changed in the same way — only first is thrown out never to be used again and the later is thrown into a hamper to be washed and reused. Newborn cloth diapers are thrown into a diaper pail (lined with a waterproof wet bag) — no need to rinse or dispose of anything inside of them. As babies begin to eat solids, their poo becomes more solid. Simply shake the solids into the toilet and throw the diaper into the pail, just like before. Another option is to use a flushable diaper liner which acts as a barrier between the diaper and the solids. Pull the liner out, solids and all, and flush it.

Throw all the dirty diapers into the washing machine. Add two tablespoons of detergent or baking soda. Select hot/cold, heavy duty cycle, with a second rinse. After the diapers are done washing, throw all of the prefolds and

diaper inserts into the dryer and dry them on medium-high heat. The diaper covers and pocket diapers should be line dried. They dry quickly.

Never ever use any fabric softener or dryer sheets when washing your diapers. The fabric softener leaves a residue that can decrease a diaper's absorbency. Check the manufacturer's guidelines for each particular type of diaper that you buy on how to launder. Read those guidelines and use your own best judgment on how you choose to launder your items.

What about the smell factor?

It shouldn't come as a surprise that dirty diapers smell. This is true, whatever the type of diaper. Here are some ways to minimize diaper pail smell: Wet a wash cloth and sprinkle two drops of tea tree oil on the washcloth and throw it into the pail, to keep odors to a minimum. On occasion, sprinkle baking soda into the pail to cut down on the odor. Or use Citrus Circles, diaper pail discs, which stick into your pail to reduce the smell.

How many diapers will my baby need?

This will get your baby from birth to potty training and be usable for another few babies:

- 1 diaper hamper
- 2 waterproof wet bags to line the hamper
- 3-4 dozen cloth wipes
- 2-4 dozen newborn diapers
- 8-10 newborn covers
- 2-4 dozen infant diapers
- 6-8 small diaper covers
- 2-3 dozen toddler diapers
- 6-8 medium covers

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